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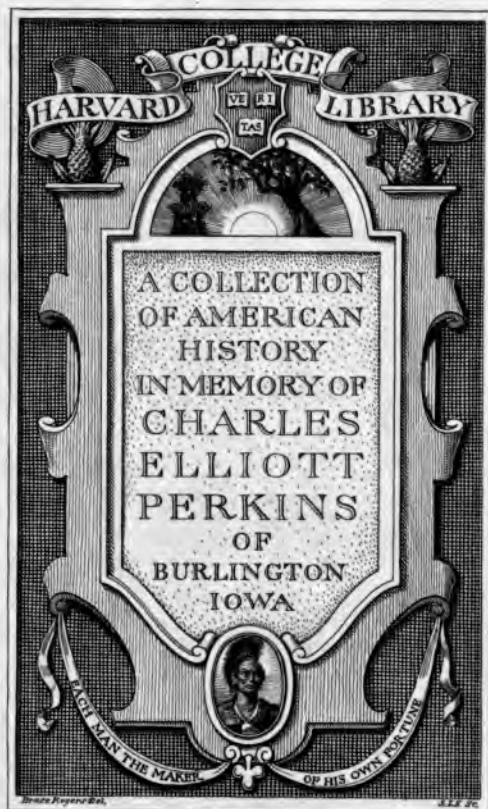
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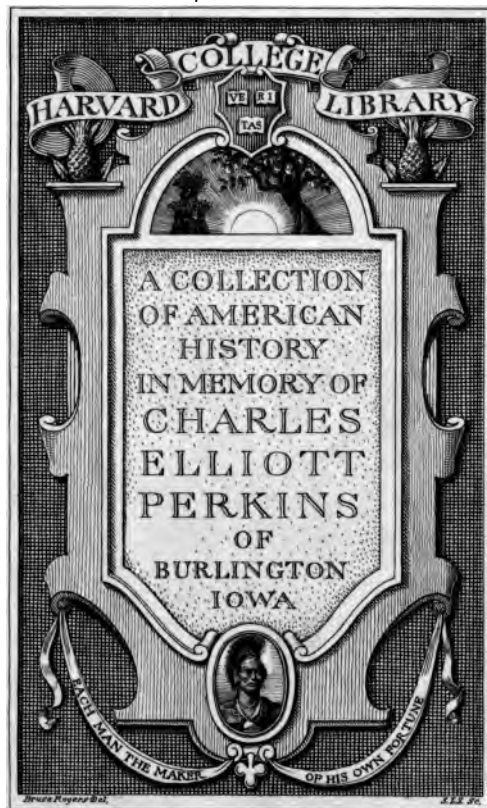


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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF THE

REV. WM. HOMES,

AT THE OPENING OF THE

Mercantile Library Hall,

OF ST. LOUIS, MO.

OCTOBER 17, 1854.



ST. LOUIS:

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION.

1855.

W. C. 5300.1055

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

JUN 30 1915

**CHARLES ELLIOTT PERKINS
MEMORIAL COLLECTION**

At the ninth annual meeting of the Mercantile Library Hall, held in the library rooms on the evening of 9th January, 1855, on motion of Mr. ALFRED VINTON, Esq., the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, The Rev. WM. HOMES, from motives of delicacy, which are highly appreciated, has omitted from his Inaugural Address all mention of the eminent services of HENRY D. BACON, Esq., to this Association; therefore, be it

Resolved, by the members of the Mercantile Library Association in annual meeting assembled, That a due regard to the truth of history, a proper self-respect, and justice to HENRY D. BACON, Esq., alike demand that the omission by Mr. HOMES should be supplied. We, therefore, declare that, in our opinion, the commencement and the completion of the Mercantile Library Hall building are both due to the public spirit and munificence of Mr. BACON; his subscription of twenty-one thousand dollars to its stock having at once secured the beginning of the enterprise, which, without his aid, would have failed. His additional advance within the last year, of ten thousand dollars, enabled the company to finish the building, and supply it with book-cases, chandeliers, desks, tables, and with seats for both lecture rooms.

Resolved, That in his donation of books, pictures, stationery and money, Mr. BACON has far outstripped all others, and has manifested a warmth of friendship for this Association, which leaves us no words in which adequately to express our thanks.

Resolved, That the Board of Directors is hereby instructed to cause these resolutions to be entered on their journal, to be communicated to Mr. BACON, and to be printed with the Inaugural Address of Rev. Mr. HOMES.

Resolved, That the Board of Directors is hereby instructed to request Mr. BACON to sit for his portrait to such artist as may be selected by himself, the portrait, when completed, to be hung in the library.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Mercantile Library Association of St. Louis :

I cannot aspire to do much more upon the present occasion, than give you specimens of such reflections as many of you must have indulged while viewing this monument, destined to serve the double purpose, of a memorial to the perpetual honor of its Mercantile founders, and an auxiliary in the attainment of high literary culture to thousands of our fellow citizens for many years to come.

It is the product of St. Louis enterprise and munificence. And in assuming the honorable duty here assigned me, it will be my object to speak in the name of the men, in whose philanthropic views this institution originated, and by whose patience under difficulties, and perseverance in the face of many discouragements, it has been brought to its present prosperous condition, so auspicious of augmented usefulness in the future.

If I feel any embarrassment in the adoption of a course of thought likely to be acceptable to the Board of Directors, it is in making a selection from the many topics which offer themselves — all of which are affiliated to the design of the Institution, and all seemingly important. If the occasion were purely one of dedication, or if, in the fulfilment of my duty here, it were necessary to seek to vindicate the character and objects of this Association to your judgments, or to win for it a place in your affections, my course would be plain and simple. But this building has already been adopted with favor and with pride by the St. Louis public, and this hour is one

quite as much of congratulation as of any thing else. It is an era in progress — a moment's resting spot in the route of ascent, whence we may survey the road traveled for nine years, and from the past draw encouragement and strength for coming years. This day commemorates, as well as inaugurates — and this address is neither prologue, nor epilogue, but a simple side talk between the acts of a drama, destined to occupy the attention of this public, long after the present actors shall have withdrawn and re-appeared upon another stage of being. Quite naturally it seems to me, then, we should, in this interview, say something about books and libraries in the past — something about this one and its founders and friends — something about its objects and our future plans. To this classification I invite your attention now.

The advantages of any era are best estimated, in contrast with some anterior period when they were wanting. The blessings of the present never appear so great, as in the comparison with times of which history preserves the record, when no wild dream even could have pictured to the mind one in a hundred of the realities of the nineteenth century.

It may be deemed a literary heresy by some, to assign any other than the first place to Greece and Rome, in all that constitutes the glory of literature and art. I am aware that there are many enthusiastic worshippers of those nations, when at the height of the splendor and glory of their civilization, who find no parallel to them in any subsequent times, and ask for no other fountains of literature or models of art. A comparison, however, of an age in which there is a general diffusion of knowledge among the millions, with any previous age, must be made upon the point of general or common advantages; and after the utmost has been said, that even imagination will allow, concerning the intellectual culture of the Greeks in early times, mention has been made of but one nation, and, in reality, of but one city in one nation — Athens. So far as the derivation of letters from Egypt is concerned, the acknowledged truth is, that the priesthood of that nation was more sacredly guarded and exclusive in its relations to the people than any

that ever ruled on earth. The "learning of the Egyptians" was an instrument of ecclesiastical power. Common diffusion of it would have destroyed one chief source of that magical power which held in subjection kings as well as subjects.

If the learning of this sacred class passed over into Greece, as it is affirmed that it did, it did not obtain a much wider range for generations. In the time of Solon there was no general culture. Two generations later, although it is said that Pisistratus founded a public library, books were scarcely known, science was indefinite, and art barbarous. Three generations later, the splendor of Grecian art was at its meridian height, reaching its culminating point in the age of Pericles. But in reading the history of this period, whether we regard the motives which actuated him who gave a practical direction to the constitutionally fine taste of the Greek, or the relation which the citizen was held to sustain to the body politic, it is impossible to see in that splendid age any thing to call up a sigh for the past. Pericles was in the place of power—dependent upon the sovereign people. Ruling over a race strong with passion, and fond of amusement, he consulted his own taste, and secured a hold upon the Athenians, by calling into existence works unsurpassed in beauty and grace of form, for the accommodation and gratification of the capricious populace; while, so far as sculpture and painting, in their highest form of culture, constitute an enviable feature of a past age, all that is ever claimed for Athens may be allowed. But the glory of Athens then, was the glory of external art, tending to the culture of but a limited department of the human intellect—its taste for the beautiful. The tragic poets of that age, *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, served no higher purpose to that pleasure-loving people, than to give rise to the immense theatres of Athens, where, at the public expense, the democracy were amused. The learning of that age was limited to the one design of practical usefulness. Intellectual culture, in itself considered, was not an object of pursuit. The citizen belonged to the entire body—he was public property—a servant of the State—though one of its sovereign democracy. Education

was desirable only so far as it subserved the ends of public usefulness. The public assemblages of Greece, were places of ceaseless public speaking ; and in these, whether political or judicial, the Greek was under the necessity of being a speaker. Whatever, therefore, would contribute to the formation of correct taste in an orator, and give best effect to his manner and utterance, was the main end of Grecian intellectual culture. And it is in this, perhaps, that we find an explanation of the unparalleled attainments of the Greek in the art of eloquence. He was, of necessity, a public speaker, and this necessity gave rise to the class of sophists and rhetoricians, who, however, conceived of no higher idea of intellectual culture, than that which was indispensable to participation in the discussions of the public assemblages of Athens. Grecian intellect was developed by these contests, and as there were honorable rewards attached to successful public speaking, there was, of course, a constant stimulus to the multiplication of the productive minds of Greece. But it has been plainly intimated by the noblest historian of that people, that the few minds of that era, whose renown is universal, overshot their own age and became the teachers of posterity. That mental activity which may, with some qualification, be said to have characterized the Athenians, found chief expression, not in written records, but in conversations and in oral discussions. The wisest of the Athenians taught only by word of mouth. Books were few, and limited to a select few in their circulation ; and one consideration alone is sufficient to furnish us with ground on which to indulge some complacency, while scanning the superior advantages of the present over the past. The State never thought of erecting public institutions of learning, to be maintained at public expense, having the very least possible concern with any of the schools. The character and qualifications of many of the tutors, privately engaged, were exceedingly low ; while the course of study for most, was reading, writing, arithmetic, music and the gymnasium. Beyond this, the main object was to awaken and foster a public spirit. The public was every thing—the individual man nothing. Any more advan-

ced instruction, for which the most enormous charges were made, the rich only could enjoy. Some, whose names have survived the lapse of ages, attained knowledge only by the greatest sacrifices — working by night in gardens and mills, in order to attend the lectures of philosophers and sophists by day.

But that which will strike the minds of the present age, as setting forever at rest the question we are now considering, is the fact that, during the most brilliant era of Grecian history, there were no provisions whatever for the education of girls. There were slaves in Greece. But the education of Grecian ladies, especially in Athens itself, was scarcely in advance of that of their slaves. They were uninstructed in mind, and graceless in manners. The only class of women in that age, who did aspire to mental accomplishments, was that of those who administered to the sensual gratification of their admirers. If we look into Sparta, the people of that renowned State were destitute of even the elements of letters. They could neither read nor write. So that it would be as truthful to history to speak of Spartan ignorance, as well as Spartan courage. Whatever meed of praise may now, after many generations, be bestowed upon Lacedæmonian virtue, or heroism, not a word can be said of the intellectual glory of that powerful State. The historians of the proudest era of that people, can point only to a “tall and vigorous breed of citizens,” when speaking of the men, and the “fine shape and masculine vigor” of the women — qualities not to be despised; but suggesting that, if there be nothing more to boast of in ancient Sparta, their equals may be found among American Indians. It was a deed worthy of praise for a Spartan youth to stand without the quiver of a muscle, or the utterance of a groan, while the stolen fox concealed beneath his cloak, tore out his bowels. The accomplishments of a scholar he was taught to despise. It is affirmed, without the possibility of dispute, that the schools of Sparta included no instruction in letters. Isocrates, quoted by Grote, speaking of the appreciation which his discourse, the Panathenaic, would meet with among the most rational of the

Spartans, says they will approve it "if they can find any one to read it to them." And the same author most satisfactorily shows the fact, that the most intelligent were obliged to procure a professional reader of any document.

And it is worthy of notice, that both Xenophon and Plato—names familiar to the literature of all subsequent ages—greatly admired the Spartan method of training men. The former, in his *Cyropaedia*, pictures an imaginary society, in which however, literature has no place. "Letters, or written compositions, or book-learning" are not essential to the glory of a perfect state. Men need only the "perfection of the physical frame—the moral character and the practical intelligence." Plato, in his ideal community, admits with the greatest caution, and under severe restraints, poets, historians and philosophers, regarding them as likely to interfere with some of the desirable ends to be attained by a proper training of youth for most efficient citizenship—expressly laying it down, in his "Laws," that "no specific encouragement should be given to the cultivation of elegant or speculative literature."

We hear of books, and book-selling in Greece. But doubts have been raised as to the existence of book-selling as a trade, and even of the existence of private libraries before the time of Aristotle. At all events, the number of those who collected the writings of the poets and sophists, was comparatively small; and as for public libraries, there is no certain evidence of the character of any previous to the Alexandrian. True, the libraries of Pisistratus of Athens, and Polycrates of Samos, are spoken of as public libraries. The annotator upon Professor Becker's *Charicles*, however, says that such a mythical obscurity pervades the accounts of these libraries, and so much boldness characterizes the conjectures concerning their destiny, that the whole is to be viewed with suspicion. Except these, there is no mention of any for generations, until the celebrated one at Alexandria. The idea of founding public libraries in Greece, was a late one, and it has been confidently asserted, by competent investigators, that there was no public plan for the advancement of science and literature, and that

no princes, of lofty and liberal mind, supplied the place of public spirit wanting in the people. Indeed it was from the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, that Athens received her first rich and magnificent library.

Somewhat later, private collections increased, though these, it is asserted, were made for parade, without any interest in science. A library was an article of fashion and luxury, and the most ignorant seemed more anxious to have them than others, occasioning the savage sneers of Lucian, in his satires upon the unlearned. Modern times have shown thriving traders in pictures and works of art, gotten up by roguery, to be palmed off on ignorant picture hunters, quite ready to be duped. But Greece carried on a more thriving trade in forged manuscripts, successful through the ignorance of the crowd of buyers — and many a library had, as its owner fancied, the autograph copies of the speeches of Demosthenes, which he never read, because he could not, or of the history of Thucydides, in the hand-writing of the same noble orator.

After an examination of ancient testimony, in reference to these points, we are satisfied that no general advantages were enjoyed or appreciated among the masses, through the books and libraries, public and private of Greece. It cannot be pretended for a moment. The circle within which literature and art flourished, was a limited and charmed one, to which "the people," in the modern sense of that term, did not, and could not aspire.

But little more can be said of Rome and her libraries. The chief public ones were not a growth out of the demands of a literary taste, but were the spoils of war. Among the people of Rome, as among the Greeks, the existence of a library did not argue literary culture in its possessor. The more ignorant one was, the more learned he wished to appear, and contented himself with reading over the titles and admiring the exterior of his books. And, as Lucian ridiculed this common pretension to literary taste among the Greeks, so Seneca, among the Romans, rebuked this rage for heaping together books by ignorant men, who in their whole life time, did not even read the

titles of their books. Perhaps, however, such satire is appropriate to every age in which vulgar or ignorant people live. That exceedingly good-natured and graceful satirist, the author of the Potiphar papers, has an amusing sarcasm upon what we must presume to be New York weakness. Mr. Potiphar's wife wants a library, and Mr. Potiphar demurs, because he don't read books, never did, and never expects to. But Mrs. P., with due "regard to appearances," desires to appear not quite as ignorant as a Hottentot, though she is, and so for the "looks of the thing," must have a library. Mr. P. agrees, and sets about indulging the literary tastes of his wife, by contracting for complete sets of elegant gilt covers to all books, essential to a gentleman's library — arranges them on his shelves, and has the best looking library in town. Soliloquising on the subject, he says: "I locked 'em in, and the key is always lost when any body wants to take down a book. However, it was a good investment in leather, for it brings me in the reputation of a reading man and a patron of literature!"

The absence of all reliable records, in which any thing is said of the literary or even educational advantages of those ancient times, is a fact of some significance. For, in the records which have escaped the destruction of war and time, we have evidence enough of the habits of the people, their amusements and their morals. And the information concerning these is enough to satisfy all, that intellectual culture, and the acquisition of learning, were not deemed essential to the attainment of the most perfect human development. The absence of general advantages for such culture, occasions no surprise, among a people whose idea of life, and what man should be, was either Grecian or Roman. The great multiplication of books by men, few in number, compared to the mass, indicates, indeed, great mental activity among the class of authors, yet furnishes slight reason to infer from it general intelligence and education, as the "learning of the Egyptians" was confined to a class, with whom learning was a consecrated possession, in which the people did not share.

At a period, subsequent to Christ's coming, books multiplied

with exceeding rapidity. The astonishing industry of a few, whose secluded and studious lives were devoted to the pursuit of philosophy and theology, produced folio after folio, not however to be read by the mass, who could not read, but to serve the purposes of a small number who ruled the church and society. The long mediæval period was a time of mental sluggishness and darkness. Yet, in that long night, there were monasteries upon hill-sides and by river courses, where the pen never ceased to move in the hands of men whose active thought labored in every department of a scholastic theology, and became fixed upon the written page. But while these men produced volumes, incredible in number for one man to write, beyond the houses where they wrote the human mind was still and motionless as a grave-yard. Men wrote books then not so much to be read, as from love of the employment. So it was in earlier times, when men who overshot their age in every intellectual accomplishment, wrote books, to be appreciated not then, and to be read not then, save by a few, but to be multiplied a thousand fold, when a new intellectual era should have dawned upon the world.

The discoveries made in the ruins of Herculaneum do not show that the private libraries of the ancients were, in general, very spacious. The shelves or cupboards, made to receive the written rolls, standing in the centre of the room, occupied so much space, that the owner with his arms stretched, could easily span the distance from shelf to wall. When it is remembered that the "triumphant and sovereign" art of printing was then unknown — that all works were the product of the pen, and that none could be multiplied faster than flesh and blood, bones and muscles could labor at the tedious process of tracing letters upon bark, or leather, or parchment, we shall appreciate at once, the incomparable advantages of the present over the past. The volumes of that day were rolls of an elastic, though rather thick bark, occupying considerable space when coiled upon a reed, so that the mere fragment of a work would be no small book of that kind. Some of those discovered in Herculaneum show this. Becker's annotator speaks of

one containing a fragment of the Iliad, eight feet long and ten inches broad. It is probable that the entire Iliad, traced with a pen on bark or parchment, would occupy many such rolls, and so be numbered as so many volumes. We may from this, form some sort of conjecture concerning the actual number of works in the Alexandrian library. It is variously set down at from 400,000 to 700,000 volumes. If, as in the Mercantile Library of Boston, consisting of 16,000 volumes, there are less than 8,000 works, we do not, probably, go wide of the mark in conjecturing that a library of 700,000 volumes in Alexandria offered not 50,000 works, when we consider how little economical in space each volume was. If a volume was to be handled at all, the merest fragment only of a work could be transcribed upon a roll of bark. We have the entire Iliad in one duodecimo volume. A fragment of it occupied a roll eight feet long by ten inches broad, as disclosed in the ruins of Herculaneum. The Alexandrian library has been pointed to as evidence of the literary splendors of the past, and even brought into comparison with modern libraries of not a fifth of its number. But our admiration of that library and its intrinsic value is much moderated by a consideration of the facts mentioned, and also of the additional one that many copies of the same work were collected in the same library. The library of the Moors, in Tripoli, boasted 3,000,000 volumes. But one room of that was entirely filled with copies of the Koran.

Rome had many libraries, public and private. Yet these give no decisive indication of a taste for literature truly national. They were brought home by Roman consuls, and graced imperial triumphs, while, to the masses, they were as valueless as Hebrew law books. This is very clearly probable, from the fact that a large share of the works of Roman libraries were Greek, and Cicero, when he wished to write in cipher, or to avoid the exposure of the contents of his letters, resorted to the Greek as the safest guard against prying eyes, or the spies of rivals.

The character of the books of antiquity, we cannot judge of. Most of them have been submerged beneath a destroy-

ing flood, while a few only have floated down to our own times. And yet, though subsequent ages have mourned over the loss of those literary treasures, how many are to be sighed for? To some their loss seems irremediable. Yet Gibbon expresses the opinion that though many are lost, it is not probable that one important truth in philosophy or art has been snatched from the knowledge of men by the perdition of all the libraries of ancient times.

It seems almost incredible that so many books should have disappeared, until we think of the waste of books likely to be occasioned by ignorant possessors, by the destroying tooth of time, and most of all, the ravages of war.

The Roman visited with indiscriminate ruin, the Jew, the philosopher and the Christian. The contempt and hatred of the Jew for Pagan and Christian, left nothing undestroyed of Christian or Roman literature; while, on the other hand, the Christian, seeing no good, save in the Bible or apostolic and patristic writings, looked with delight on the ruin of Grecian, Roman, Jewish, and Arabian literature; and the Saracen crowned this work of a barbarous age, by the conflagration of the Alexandrian library in the year 640, handing over its immense treasures to the menials of the city for fuel to the public baths.

But yet, even here, what an argument do we find for books—what a eulogy upon literature—what a tribute to immortal mind! The evidences of the material power of Greece and Rome have ceased to exist, save in the books which have survived. The monuments of the intellectual greatness of their hierarchy of minds, and of the high culture of ancient taste and art, have outlived the crumbings of time and the destroying hand of war, escaping all those accidents through which, mysteriously, the products of men disappear. The results of Roman culture remain—the products of Grecian literature live immortal; and mankind, impelled by those instincts of our nature, which alone ennoble humanity, pay tribute not to Grecian heroism and Roman valor, but to Roman mind—cherishing, with affection and veneration, the fruits of Athenian and Roman

intellect, without a sigh for aught, save their lost literary treasures.

Essential to the completeness of this picture of the past is the statement, that the Christian church itself is responsible for no small share of the destruction of the literature of these early times. To its members, Pagan literature seemed the fountain or nursery of false philosophy and false religion. All that did not originate in the bosom of the church, with monks and laity, soon fell into neglect, and without care, perished. History tells us of a protracted period of ignorance and barbarism, when manuscript pages of the princes of Roman literature, were blotted out, or irremediably defaced — the most elegant compositions of the classic age erased — Livy and Tacitus, of whom fragments only have reached later ages, being blotted out, precious history and philosophical truths giving place to the rude and worthless writings, the incredible legends, and astounding fictions of a superstitious age. It is in their passage through Christian hands that many of the works of the past have suffered their most melancholy mutilation.

I do not intend to hold up to contempt here, that ignorance or superstition of a past age, which could view with suspicion the writings of Pagan antiquity, and undervalue the historical records, as well as the poetry, oratory and philosophy of the brightest period of the civilization of the world in ancient times ; but it is curious to notice the firm establishment of the distinction between sacred and profane literature in the mind of the middle ages. Although profane books were called for by the educated or learned of that time, yet, if a statement of D'Israeli is to be relied on, it was with very little show of reverence. To distinguish profane books from others, he relates that the monks invented a contemptuous sign. When asking for a Pagan author, after making the general sign they used in their manual and silent language, when they wanted a book, they added a particular one, which consisted in scratching under the ear, as a dog is accustomed to do with his paw, because, said they, an unbeliever is compared to a dog. In this way they expressed an *itching* for those dogs, Virgil and Horace.

When taste for literature, after its long sleep or death, revived, the scarcity of books may be inferred from the statement, that we owe all our copies of Tacitus, the historian, to one single copy received from a monastery in Westphalia. The escape of this one only from destruction, seems a little remarkable, when it is remembered that the Roman Emperor Tacitus placed copies of the historian in every library of the empire, and each year of his reign had ten copies transcribed. The knowledge of Quintillian, that prince of criticism, was preserved to the present age, through a copy discovered under a heap of rubbish, in a decayed coffer in the vaults of a monastery. The code of Justinian, almost lost sight of from the time of that emperor, was accidentally found by the Pisans, in the taking of a city in Calabria. The enormous value attached to books, previous to the discovery of the art of printing, placed them at a hopeless remove from the reach of any but the opulent, and, at the same time, proves the scarcity of that which, to the present age, seems as necessary as food and clothing. The Bishop of Durham purchased thirty or forty volumes, for a private library, for fifty pounds' weight of silver — worth \$800 now — immensely more then, when labor was compensated at a rate of less than four pence a day. A good copy of the Bible could not be produced by transcription in less than two years. It is said that one hundred Bibles could not be produced under the expense of seven thousand days or twenty years of labor. Contrast this with Hoe's presses, dispensing matter equal to a volume, in less than a minute.

In other places, the manuscript price of a Bible was sixty crowns, and of some works now within reach of the poor, an estate could not buy a copy, and scarcely would be accepted as security for its safe return. When Louis the Eleventh, absolute king, wished to borrow a copy of Rases, an Arabian doctor of medicine, he was not only required to deposit one hundred golden crowns as security for its return, but also to find a nobleman of wealth to unite with him as surety in a deed to return it. (The disadvantages of that age were great, though

the fact just mentioned indicates one advantage held by the lender over us. Books, like umbrellas, are never returned now.) In 1471, when a baron, who wished to borrow of the medical faculty of Paris, a copy of Avicenna, a distinguished Arabian philosopher and physician, offered ten marks of silver as security for its return, the same was refused as not equal to the risk of losing a copy of Avicenna. Even the religious books of those mediæval times were so rare, that, when the Countess of Anjou wanted a book of Homilies, she paid for it two hundred sheep, with some martin skins, and many bushels of wheat and barley. If any were so fortunate as to be the possessors of books, they were a rich resource from whence to replenish an exhausted treasury. A student of Paris, ruined in fortune by excess, raised another by pawning a manuscript copy of a body of law; and a grammarian re-built his house, destroyed by fire, with two small volumes of Cicero. It is related of the Bishop of Winchester that, in 1299, he gave a bond for the return of a Bible borrowed from his own convent, drawn up with great solemnity. For the gift of this book to the convent, the monks appointed a daily mass for the soul of the donor. Indeed the presentation of a book to one of these religious houses, was deemed so valuable a donation, as to merit the reward of eternal salvation. In Spain, one Bible or missal was obliged to serve the spiritual wants of several monasteries. Even as late as 1505, after the invention of printing, a primer and psalter cost twelve pence, equal to half a load of barley, or six days' work of a laborer; and a large folio law book cost forty shillings, or in beef, equaled three fat oxen.

As late as the year 1300, the celebrated Oxford Library consisted of only a few tracts kept in a chest, and in 1364, the Royal Library of Paris did not exceed twenty volumes. The University of Paris could boast of only four classic authors—single copies of Cicero, Ovid, Lucan and Boethius—and I have somewhere seen it stated that the most extensive library in England, in 1248, had only four English books, and those on common religious topics. The celebrated library established by the Duke of Gloucester, afterward composing part of the

British Museum, had only six hundred volumes. These facts would be diluted by any comment. They strike an intellectual reader of the present age, like a picture of famine.

Even after the invention of printing, we find, for long years, nothing but facts which tend to heighten our appreciation of the advantages of the present. The restrictions upon the freedom of the press, for a long period, greatly limited the benefits of the art of printing. One cannot but smile as he reads an edict of Henry the Eighth, in 1535, that all the ports are to be closed against a little book brought by some folks from New Castle, and that letters should be written to all cities, towns and places, forbidding it to be sold. Even the New Testament, in English, multiplied rapidly by the press, was hunted down in all houses, streets and lanes, and so great alarm was felt by kings, cardinals and bishops, that, in 1586, orders were given to seize all letter-presses, and that all printing instruments should be defaced, melted, sawed in pieces, broken or battered at the smith's forge. Printing was to be under the supervision of great officers of state — law books to be approved by chief-justices, historical by the secretary of state, divinity lumped in with poetry, philosophy and physio, must pass the scrutiny of the bishops of London, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, while the number of printers in England was limited to twenty, and of letter-founders to four. Only one individual was allowed to import books, who was to submit all he did import, to the inspection and care of the Archbishop, so that "a student or writer, in hunt of a quotation, could not find it without a visit to Lambeth palace."

In the libraries which were opened to the people, the Bodleian for example, the guardianship of the books was so severe that each volume was tethered by a chain to the shelves, so that none could be carried out, but must be consulted, if at all, there where they were. In the early part of the seventeenth century, the Cottonian Library, consisting of ancient manuscripts concerning the early history of England, was taken away from its possessor by the government, on the ground that it was too dangerous to be disseminated. Happily for poster-

ty that collection was not destroyed, but now remains. But its collector, Sir Robert Corton, denied all access to his library, declared to a friend, that those who had locked up his library had broken his heart; and so worn did he become with his injured feelings, that a friend has said, "from a ruddy complexioned man, his face was changed into a grim blackish paleness, near the resemblance and hue of a dead visage."

Even as late as 1770, the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* utters a eulogy upon the king of Denmark, for the extraordinary privilege accorded to readers to take home books free of charge.

Such facts as these, gleaned from various sources, and, perhaps, familiar to some here, are interesting in a historical point of view, but more so, for the purpose for which they have been presented — the contrast they form with the circumstances of the present. The sovereign art of printing, and the advance in principles of free government, have revolutionised the world. The multiplication of books will be appreciated by the statement that, from the period of the invention of printing, up to the year 1816, 3,277,764,000 volumes were issued from the press. And if averaging only one inch in thickness, standing in a line, they would reach 50,000 miles, or more than twice around the globe. The Royal Library of Paris, with its original half a score of volumes, now numbers over 840,000 volumes. Besides this in Paris alone, the libraries number, in volumes, over 1,300,000 — while in France there are 273 libraries, or 3,000,000 volumes, where once, when Pope Martin was in search of books, not one copy of Quinctillian's institutes, or of Cicero's treatise on oratory, could be found.

From the year 1700 to 1756, there were issued 5280 new works — not much advance upon the preceding century, though the numbers of an edition were greatly increased. From 1790 to 1800, as many new works were issued as in the preceding fifty years. During the succeeding twenty-seven years, there were issued 19,860 new publications, not including pamphlets. In England alone, since 1820, there were, up to 1840, over

15,000 octavo publications issued. In 1847, were issued 3,414 new works.

The number of booksellers in France, in 1830, was 1124. Five years ago, the number of London booksellers was 5,499, while, in Great Britain, it was 13,355.

These astounding changes have a cause—they are to be traced to causes intimately associated with the spirit of the age—they are connected with the general influences which have worked forward as silently as the powers of nature—gradually narrowing the limits of dominant classes and ranks, and widening the range of the true sovereigns of the world—"the people." The crisis in the history of England, which witnessed the first fatal blow to the power of the barons, and convinced all England that a new power had risen—the British people—was a crisis as interesting to the world of letters as to the political world. Literature cannot flourish when there is no "public"—no "people." Of course it is not meant that literary men have not flourished under despotism. But this is meant, that no true intellectual life has pervaded the masses, and in turn stimulated increased activity and productiveness in literary men, where there has not been an emancipation, more or less thorough, from all despotic restrictions. And even in France, where, for many generations, oppressive princes by unjust measures, exasperated the people, till the hour of revolution came, the interesting spectacle is presented of a political monarchy and a republic of letters working side by side. The freedom—the license allowed to men of letters, was an inconsistency—a contradiction—and, among other causes, was one which finally led to the scenes of '93. The glory of French literature is connected with that freedom which was allowed to it, to choose its own paths, and seek its way among the people.

Once, there was no public to rely upon, and men of letters were in abject condition. Nearly all that is glorious and enduring in literature has been built upon the demands of the people. It once, as we have seen, required royal munificence even to borrow a book. The privilege of ownership could be

enjoyed only by kings and barons, in a period when the most incredible opulence gilded the darkness and gloom of the grim night of ignorance, which reigned for ages. The time has been when libraries were only for the few—books only for those whose treasuries were imperial in their affluence; while now the rich and the great have no privileges, other than those of the poor—the printing press casts off its impressions for the rich, yet labors for the poor no less—and books, multiplying in response to the call of the public mind, which once was not created, but now is the sovereign power of the world, have become as “free as air, and cheap as bread.” The public sentiment of an enlightened age, is that whereby literature flourishes and must subsist. When this exists, creating a demand for the productions of human intellect, as well as for those of the hands and of machinery, there will be that which will never fail to stimulate and supply. Professor Whewell asks, what is the broad and predominant distinction between the arts of nations rich, but in a condition of stationary civilization, like Oriental nations, and nations which have felt the full influence of progress, like England? And he answers in substance that, in the former, the arts are exercised to gratify the tastes of the few; in the latter, to supply the wants of the many. With the one, the wealth of a province is absorbed to deck the shoulders of a luxurious prince—with the other, the sinews of iron and steel and all the powers of art and capital are at work to cover the bodies of the millions.

Machinery, with its million unwearied fingers, deprives the absolute despot of his privilege, by bringing all products within the reach of the masses; while, among savage people, whose civilization has taken a repose of hundreds of years, tens of thousands labor for one.

These considerations, offered in connection with the progress of material art, are pertinent to the subject of literature to-day, in contrast with its condition in past generations. The great inequalities in rank have been greatly modified—wealth is equalized—thousands are not tributary to one—imperial wealth is in the treasuries of subjects—the printing press,

with its marvelous improvements, has destroyed all monopoly in literature, freeing it from the trammels of poverty, while the freedom of Germany, France, England and America, the great publishing nations of the world, has created a free, thirsting mind in millions, and literature looks not now to royal patrons, but to the "sovereign people" for its support. The noblest libraries in the United States, are the product of plebeian wealth—of individual beneficence. Our own library—the growth of nine years—is itself a testimony, at once honorable and encouraging, of the power there is in the people to sustain and foster literature, and build its noblest monuments—the storehouses of its treasures.

In whose mind was first conceived the thought which has found ultimate embodiment here in this visible and material shape, I have not been able to ascertain. Like most of the enterprises of a commercial city, it grew out of a felt necessity, which seems to have occasioned first a talk upon the street, and resulted in an agreement to meet for consultation.

Previous to the death of Col. A. B. Chambers, the editor of the Republican, I had hoped to obtain exact information from him. He was one of the original movers in this enterprise, and yielded to it an intelligent and appreciative support, up to the period of his death, as he did to all public enterprises, which promised benefit to the city, whose prosperity he materially aided for many years. From him I did learn, however, that Peter Powell, Esq., and John C. Tevis, Esq., were mainly instrumental in urging those measures which soon resulted in the organization of the Mercantile Library Association of St. Louis. The former of these, remembered now by many with affectionate respect, for his many virtues as a christian man and public-spirited citizen, died soon after the founding of this Association, sincerely lamented by his commercial associates, and by none more than by those who united with him in this beneficent work. From him, therefore, I could learn nothing. The latter, Mr. John C. Tevis, much to my regret, has been for some time away from the city, so that the information which, perhaps, he alone could have given me, could

not be obtained. The honorable mention which has been made of him, however, by several gentlemen, whose recollection of the early events of the history of this Association, seems to be distinct, would show that, were he here on this occasion of congratulation, he would be entitled to special honor at our hands. He may be sure that he is not forgotten while we seek to trace our course back to its true beginning. It was in the counting-room of his store, that Peter Powell, A. B. Chambers, J. F. Franklin, R. P. Perry, R. K. Woods, J. Halsall, Wm. P. Scott and John C. Tevis, met on the night of December 30, 1845, for the purpose of taking the preliminary steps toward forming a Library Association. Peter Powell was in the chair, and called the meeting to order. A. B. Chambers offered the original resolutions, as follows :

Resolved, That it is deemed expedient for the merchants of this city to form a Mercantile Library Association, for their own mutual improvement, and the improvement of those in their employ ; and that in so doing, they deem it expedient to form a library principally devoted to such subjects as are useful to men engaged in commercial pursuits ; but that, whilst the primary object is mercantile, all other professions are respectfully invited to unite.

Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed at this meeting, to select a committee of fifteen, to propose and report to a meeting of merchants and others, to be held at the office of the St. Louis Insurance Company, on the 13th day of January next, at 7, p. m., a constitution and by-laws, in conformity with the above resolutions ; and that the selection of the committee, so far as practicable, be made from the various departments of commercial business.

In accordance with the above, Messrs. Powell, Budd, Kennett, Yeatman, Hall, Rust, Halsall, Ricketson, Dougherty, Peterson, Southack, Clark, Chambers, Bannard, and Glasgow, were appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws.

On January 13th, 1846, at a meeting held pursuant to public call, in Concert Hall, the Association was organized by the adoption of a constitution. A series of resolutions was presented and adopted, of which the most significant were :

1. That a committee of ten be appointed to obtain signatures to the constitution, and to solicit donations of money and books.

This committee was composed of Messrs. Yeatman, Woods, Tevis, Talbot, Blackwood, Clark, Barth, Carson, Peterson and Thomas.

2. That a committee of five be appointed to prepare a classification of books, and to furnish a list of pamphlets, magazines and other periodicals, for the Library and Reading-Room.

This important committee was composed of Messrs. Hall, Kennett, Thompson and Budd.

3. That a committee be appointed to secure rooms suitable for the accommodation of the Association.

Messrs. Halsall, Scott and Rutherford, were that committee.

4. That an election of officers be held January 27th.

That election was held at the house of J. F. Franklin, and resulted as follows: James E. Yeatman, president; L. M. Kennett, vice-president; R. K. Wood, treasurer; S. A. Ranellett, corresponding secretary; J. A. Dougherty, recording secretary: Wm. M. Morrison, Jno. C. Tevis, P. Powell, G. K. Budd, A. Peterson, F. Franklin and Robt. Barth, directors.

The committees entered promptly upon the discharge of their duties, and at a meeting held February 2d, rendered a report of books purchased, and of cash collected, \$1809 25; subscriptions, \$498—a sum total of \$2,307 25. February 16th, the committee entrusted with the matter, reported rooms engaged, corner of Pine and Main streets, and three book-cases purchased for the library.

At this meeting, lectures were provided for. It is also part of the record history of the Association, that, at this time, a proper regard was had to the comfort and patience of the future patrons of the lectures, as is shown by the resolution, that each lecturer be requested to bring his lecture "within one hour, if practicable." It may not become one, who is quite sure to transcend the bounds of this suggestion to-night, to say much about it. I do not find, however, any further record upon the subject, so that it is fair to presume that lecturers are to be allowed hereafter to speak till they get done.

In reviewing the records, I observe that the committee on lectures determined upon a series of sixteen lectures, each one to be delivered by a distinct person, on the ground that it would "scarcely be possible, in a mixed community, to select a course of lectures, on any one or two subjects, agreeable to all." The experience of the New York Association is quoted in proof of the opinion that *courses*, by one lecturer, will not pay. The experience of the Philadelphia Association is adduced in proof that a series by single lectures is very profitable. I allude to this now with the simple remark, that the experience of this Association has proved that courses, by one lecturer, may be profitable, and also that the board of directors of the New York Association, in one of their annual reports, very decidedly express the opinion that a miscellaneous course is not profitable to the audience, however it may be to the treasury of the Association.

In April or May, (the records do not show which,) an appropriation of \$1500 was made for the purchase of books, to which, shortly after, another appropriation of \$500 was added, and the president of the Association, James E. Yeatman, Esq., was authorized to make the purchase. He executed the duties of his trust with excellent judgment, and a true appreciation of the first wants of the Association. It is a matter of gratification and pride, that we have this early friend of this enterprise still among us, and now, as then, one of its most intelligent and generous supporters, and entitled, by reason of past unfaltering services to most grateful recognition, upon this occasion of common rejoicing.

In April, 1846, the library was opened to the mercantile community. By September 28th, the property of the Association was judged valuable enough to be insured to the amount of \$2000, about which time the library was removed to its new quarters in Glasgow's Row. At the annual meeting, in January, 1847, the report of the first year exhibited a membership of 261, an income of \$2,664, and volumes purchased to the number of 1018.

At this meeting, a resolution was introduced to discontinue

lectures. The reasons for this were well known at the time. The lectures were not well attended nor sustained. Many now here remember very well that, ten years ago, the patrons of lectures were very few. Taste for such literary entertainments was not then created. One of the most distinguished men in the west—a citizen of St. Louis, with an attractive subject, sure, in his hands, to be invested with extraordinary interest, could not draw, at that time, with all the aids of advertising, and editorial stimulants, one-tenth the number that would have gathered at an hour's notice, to witness the feats of a vagrant mountebank. The resolution alluded to was put to vote and lost, and the revolution which has taken place in St. Louis, in regard to lectures, is to be ascribed to the persevering efforts of the Mercantile Library Association. A taste was created by them, and fostered by food, judiciously selected and administered, until now the chief solicitude of the directors is, how to meet the public demand for such literary entertainments.

The first motion for a charter was made January 26th, 1847, and the form of it was adopted January 28th. At a meeting held February 1st, this year, on motion of Mr. Vinton, it was most wisely determined that the Association would incur no debt, and I believe that rule has been adhered to till now—the Association being thus delivered from that which has proved a fatal incubus upon the prosperity of similar institutions—financial embarrassment.

In 1847, the enlarged necessities of the library, and the convenience of its friends, required the renting of two houses in Glasgow's Row, and the appropriation of three rooms in the second story to the uses of the Association. The membership, this year, increased to 360, and at the annual meeting, January, 1848, the library was reported as containing 2,282 volumes, valued at \$3,038.

The above items are selected from the unpublished records of the Association, and with them I cease, because, after this, the regular series of published reports commences, and to them I refer you. I have briefly alluded to these facts of our early history, to illustrate the vigor, the determined spirit and energy

with which this Association was founded and sustained in its first two years. It was no spasmodic effort. The design was conceived, wisely considered, and prudently executed by those who took it in hand, with results which may, indeed, seem small to us now, but which then indicated steady growth, and stimulated to yet wider endeavors. A comparison of the early growth of this Association, with that of similar ones elsewhere, warrants us in the indulgence of sentiments of complacency upon an occasion like the present. It is, undoubtedly, safe to say, that a history of such marked and rapid success, is unexampled in the United States.

The Boston Mercantile Library Association, founded in 1820, reported only eighty-one members at the end of eight years. At the end of fourteen years, but 2,400 volumes were reported as the number in the library. In 1842, but 3,320 volumes, and in 1845, only 4,775, and its receipts \$2,219 — less than our own the first year of our existence. The Cincinnati library was founded in 1836. In 1847, it numbered 4,786 volumes, and its receipts amounted to \$2,500. The attention of the second president of this Association, Alfred Vinton, Esq., was attracted to these facts, and in his report for the year ending January, 1849, he remarks : “ Our Association is but three years old, and yet we have nearly as many books as were possessed by the Library Association of New York, after an existence of five years, or that of Cincinnati, when it had existed eight years, as that of Philadelphia, when it had existed ten years, and more than that of Boston, after an existence of nineteen years.” And now, at the end of nine years, so steady and sustained has been the increase, that we register nearly one thousand members — that we have a library approaching 12,000 volumes, of actual money value of about \$19,000, and a reported income for the last year, of \$8,541 15. Add to these, this most conspicuous evidence of our success — the building in which we are assembled — which, with its essential appurtenances, is valued at \$140,000, and we have before us appreciable results, stimulating, not to vain pride — though they do reward the labors of the past — but to greater indus-

try, and devotion, assuring all the friends of the Association that such labors, with enlarged means and increased auxiliaries to success, exerted year by year, will be rewarded at no remote period, with a library, which, in number, character, and usefulness, will be scarcely surpassed by one in the United States.

And here let one thing be remembered—this library has not been a mere collection of books, standing upon the shelves; it has been a circulating library—read by increasing numbers, and issued by thousands during the year. It has contributed to the learning embodied in the sermons of the pulpit; it has furnished materials for lectures delivered in this city, and to numerous audiences in our sister State across the river. It has added to the resources of professional men, whose character has given honor to St. Louis, and it has furnished aid to students and literary men living beyond our bounds. Books and readers have increased together, and the growth of the library, to its present number, has been stimulated and regulated by the growing demands of the growing number of its patrons and friends. This building—without its equal among those erected for similar purposes in the United States, spacious and costly, was planned and built, not as a matter of ostentatious display, nor in mere anticipation of a future need, but because already needed, because our library required, as a matter of indispensable necessity, more generous quarters for its enlarged numbers, and because, without it, the original design of the institution, indicated at its founding, and expressed in the constitution, could not be fulfilled. Added to these considerations is another—the very obvious fact, that the Association stood in need of permanent sources of revenue, in order to promote the growth of the library, and be in condition to enlarge its plans concerning lectures, of a highly scientific and instructive character, for the benefit of all, and to procure soon such apparatus, cabinets and specimens of art, as may fall within the original purpose of the Association. All these suggest that we are simply up to the times, and not in advance in having thus at the end of nine years such a building as this.

As it has been my object, in tracing in a rapid manner, the history of this Association, to speak chiefly of its founders, and of those early efforts of which this house is the outgrowth, I shall not delay to speak of the men who are known to this community as the builders of this temple of literature. Their praise is in all mouths, and they need no encomium from me, since this dedicatory occasion bespeaks their eulogy. We owe to them the pleasures of this night.

Nor need I delay to describe the temple itself. You are here and can see it—erected upon a plan presented by a St. Louis architect—Mr. Mitchell—who, for his good taste, the convenience of the arrangements, and the substantial character of the work, merits a share of the enjoyment of this congratulatory meeting. You need not move from your seats—but there in the artistic, complex, and yet unconfused design of that ceiling, and of all the decorations of this hall, constituting it the most beautiful, as it is the most spacious of any in the land, save one, you may see the title of Mr. Mitchell to the thanks and honor of this Association, whilst he may point to this Mercantile Library building as a substantial evidence of his merit as an architect.

Of the reading room, designed upon the same spacious scale, it may be said, that it is unexcelled anywhere, in its adaptations to enjoyment and use—it is not, indeed equalled. There is no library room in the country, where, in summer, or winter, with more unqualified satisfaction and delight, the student and the scholar may pass his hours of literary leisure. Prove it by going in and trying it for yourselves.

An inspection of the whole building—of all its internal arrangements, will show that the money subscribed by the public has not been wasted, nor misapplied. And when you are informed that now, with the building and membership, a net revenue of \$5000 may be depended upon for the increase of the library, you will be prepared to say, that no mere speculation and reckless scheming was concerned in the attempt to persuade the public to invest money here, but the whole is the result of wise calculation and enlarged philanthropic views.

The library, which is the central point of attraction in this structure, is worthy of the home provided for it. From the outset, the greatest care has been observed in the selection of its volumes. Our pecuniary means were limited, and, of course, there could be no other way than to make the most of what we had. The plan was first to start with such a collection as should prove to be a nucleus, itself determining the future character of the library. The original classification was submitted by Mr. Alfred Vinton, whose name appears among those of the early active friends and supporters of the Association. So far as I have been able to learn public sentiment in reference to this gentleman, no small share of the present prosperity of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association is to be ascribed to the indefatigable devotion with which he has watched and sustained its true interests—uniting with others in liberal pecuniary contributions, but also bestowing that which is even more indispensable than money—personal labor—energetic and patient, without which, many an enterprise has found money spent in vain. In the classification presented by him, a rare experience is displayed in the relative value of certain classes of books, and a solid foundation laid upon which to rear a library of permanent value and general usefulness. To our catalogue has been accorded the high honor of an encomium from Mr. Cogswell, the selector of the Astor library, that it represented a library of which we might well be proud. The classification alluded to, was, in brief: 1. Books of reference. 2. Science, art, manufacture. 3. Voyages and travels. 4. History and biography. 5. Poetry, belles-lettres, bibliography, oratory, drama, philosophy, fine arts. 6. Fiction. This, as a general classification, presents to your minds a view of what we have. An examination of the library warrants the assertion that there is in it a less amount of trash than in any similar library in the country. The Bodleian Library in England, numbering 400,000 volumes, is greatly complained of as having an enormous amount of worthless publications, so far as the true uses of a library are concerned, owing to two things—the regulation requiring the donation to the li-

brary of copies of all books entered at Stationers' Hall, and to the character of some bequests. From these sources, the library has greatly increased, yet, without augmenting the intrinsic value of it. Our library is the product of money, expended by a careful committee, and is unencumbered by masses of books, not worth shelf room. Of course it is limited in certain departments. How could it be otherwise? Departments have been supplied, as well as could be expected, with the means at hand. Whatever deficiencies there are in any, it is one object steadily pursued, to supply them at the earliest possible date, due regard being had to the necessities of all. In the department of periodicals, we are rich. They constitute one of the most valuable resources of learning for popular use. Embracing all subjects, they present a concentration of erudition, giving to the reader the marrow of a subject—the results of a voluminous reading and protracted study. Some sets of reviews are fragmentary. But the committee, each year, completes one set or more, intending that, in process of time, all reviews and periodicals of standard character, shall stand complete upon our shelves.

There is a kind of light, floating literature, of no permanent value, useless for the purposes of a library, and at variance with the design of this institution—which is “mental improvement”—of which the committee has provided an abundant share, and enjoys the approbation of the judicious for not having provided more. At first, the design was to aim at the gratification of all tastes, without detracting from the true dignity of a library; and, therefore, works of fiction of standard reputation were included liberally in the first selections and up to this time. But to spend money in building up a library composed of the ephemeral, trashy, mind-dissipating works of the day, would be a culpable perversion of funds, and immensely to the deterioration of the character of the library. We look to see this library foster other tastes than that for indiscriminate novel reading, trusting that the covert satire of a minute of our records—that “our young men are liberal pa-

trons of the novelists, as our records will show"—may be only a memorial of the past.

When a high point is gained in any enterprise, mere spectators, or those who, without laboring, come in to share the benefits, are apt to forget the toils by which that point has been gained. Often, when success has crowned an effort, and the triumph is complete, those to whom the real honor of the triumph belongs, are likely to be forgotten. But there has been toil and patience. The results we see could not have been produced without these. The records of the successive Boards of Directors, show that there has been hard work, anxiety, discouragement, in the pathway by which we have reached our present eminence. And there are those here to-night, who could tell how they sat by the cradle of this institution with almost paternal affection and devotion, tended its first days of weakness and uncertainty, wrestled with difficulties, nerved themselves in hours of discouragement, extorted support from unwilling hands, inspired the hopeless and unbelieving with faith. We know these things, and there is in us no insensibility, or failure to appreciate the self-denying labor by which our present prosperity has been achieved. If now no difficulties appear, but all is swimming success, let the highest respect, and honor be accorded to the responsible managers of the Association from year to year, whose weekly meetings, out of sight and unthought of, have witnessed the inception of plans, the devising of means, and the application of the force, by which this enterprise has been moved up to its present position, commanding the confidence and the pride of the citizens of St. Louis.

In giving a moment's thought to their labors, not forgetting that most perplexing one of the choice of books, one is reminded of Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of the first public library in England. He exclaims concerning the difficulty he met with in determining upon the classes, or works of authors for his library, to founding which he turned his back on court favors, and the advantages of that society to which by rank and character he belonged,—“often rejecting, always augmenting, still

counseling, now advising or being advised, requiring the coöperation of many favorable circumstances, some kind of knowledge, some *purse-ability*, great store of honorable friends, else it would prove a vain attempt and inconsiderate." And when he alludes to his "hopes and disappointments, the humiliating solicitations, and minute drudgery," we may learn from it of much which is unspoken here, but has had existence during the brief history of this library. And these were the words of consecration with which he devoted himself to a work full of difficulty indeed, yet promising a rich reward in the benefits he would confer upon others: "the project is cast, and, whether I live or die, to such ends altogether I address my thoughts and deeds." When his librarian, Dr. James, groaned over his "interminable labors," Bodley reproached him with gentle words — "I am toiling exceedingly, no less than yourself, with writing, buying, binding, and disposing; but I am fed with pleasure at seeing the end." Something of this spirit has certainly animated the founders, officers and directors of this Association, through whom, in the brief space of nine years, it has become, what all eyes can see it to be, the chief object of literary pride in the West.

I have alluded to Sir Thomas Bodley's librarian, Dr. James. No better opportunity will occur in which to introduce our own most excellent librarian, Mr. Curtis. As this is a family affair, it will not be deemed an intrusion into private matters, if I say I believe that Mr. Curtis is unmarried. With Sir T. Bodley for our authority, we may say that he has our approbation in remaining so. Bodley insisted that Dr. James should continue in a state of celibacy; for, said he, "marriage is too full of domestic impeachments to afford him so much time from his private affairs." And when Dr. J. gave a practical illustration of his dissent from any such doctrine, Sir Thomas gravely admonished him of the "absurdity of such conduct upon the part of one who had the care of a public library, for it was opening a gap to disorder hereafter." Mr. Curtis, who has the honor of being esteemed very highly in his official as well as personal character, and of enjoying the confidence of the

Board, may know now just how long his services will be judged indispensable.

On this dedicatory occasion, having in the course of remark reached the point whence we look forward into the future, it is not expected that I should tarry to set forth the intent of this Association, or the work to be done. Its history tells what that has been, and foretells what will be hereafter. The past has been a period of improvement and advance. We may safely leave the responsible duties of the office of Directors in the hands of the present chief officer, Capt. John T. Douglass, and his co-adjutors in the important trust committed to their care. The present year has been one of some anxiety, requiring skill and diligent attention to duty on the part of the managers of the institution. The intelligent fidelity and constancy of application with which they have executed the duties of their position, give them a strong and direct claim upon the cordial support and approbation of this community, in all plans they may submit for the good of the Association.

As their predecessors have done, they will continue to augment the number of the volumes of the library, yet always with an eye to general usefulness. This library must yet become what the city itself is rapidly growing to be—metropolitan in its character. Scholars and literary men, of this State and of Illinois, have often, within ten years past, journeyed to eastern cities to spend weeks in theological, scientific, and other learned investigations, in the libraries of Boston, Harvard and New York; or have written to employ amanuenses to copy for them such portions of works as they needed for their special profession, or for literary purposes. We look to see this library take the place of all others, for Western men. Already it offers inducements to investigators from abroad, and they are occasionally found poring over the original works in which the library abounds. And it will not prove a vain prophecy, that the present managers and their successors will invest this library with that dignity which is inseparable from the character of one, which is a fountain-head in all departments of literature and science. There may be one kind of original works which

we can not aspire to gain ; I refer to original, ancient manuscripts. In the nature of the case, these are limited in number. The older university libraries of Europe have these ; the younger libraries of the Continent have very few ; the library of Berlin has very few ; and the library of Göttingen, the best selected library in Europe, has few likewise. So that whoever has occasion to consult such authorities, must cross the sea to do it. But, excepting these, it will be the duty and the aim of this Association gradually to accumulate, as the back-bone of the library, on which a wide-spread fame may rest — and which shall constitute the strength of its usefulness, giving it a high, determinate and universal value — works of standard authority and original learning. These are the kind of works which form a library, suited not to one generation merely, but to all time.

One desideratum there is however, which ought immediately to be supplied, in order that the true value, and utility of this library may be fully realized. We need an alphabetical and classified catalogue of the whole library, as complete as is Poole's Index to Periodical Literature. For instance, one of you wishes to learn something about the comic and satirical literature of the middle ages ; how will you find it in this library ? Probably there is some book here which could give you what you want ; but you can not imagine what one it is, nor will any catalogue which we have, help you to it. By going to Poole, you can find a reference to one review article on the subject. Perhaps not two feet from you there is something more and better on the subject ; but you do not know it, and it is as vain to you as though it was not there. We need, therefore, an index to the whole library — what a table of contents in a book is to it. Without it, there is ceaseless liability to waste of time and vexation ; for there must be an annoying, groping, uncertain search — sometimes wasting hours for that which, with such an index as I have mentioned, could be arrived at in five minutes. To illustrate more fully the utility of such an index, take the London Quarterly with its hundred volumes. We wish to obtain information about Mirabeau. We can find an article upon

him, by taking each volume and examining it, or we can do it by taking down each index of the series and examining. But a much more expeditious way would be, to refer to Poole, where the volume and page of the review is indicated, of the article desired; and, in addition, we should find there references to twenty articles on Mirabeau, scattered through as many reviews — to examine all which would occupy half a day. We find what we want, by reference to Poole, in five minutes. And when we remember that many readers do not pretend to peruse volumes entire, but read by subjects, as Gibbon relates that he did, we see the cogent reasons there are for seeking to supply this want in our library.

To make such a catalogue as this, sufficiently comprehensive and detailed, without being too minute, would cost time and patience, experience and expense. But it can be made, and I am happy in being able to state that friends stand ready to meet the expense, and that an experienced scholar can be found to undertake the work. It remains for the managers of the Library Association to take the initiatory steps. The work can not be completed under one administration, nor two. But the high honor of commencing it may belong to this administration, if they will. Nothing yet done is comparable to this in value. There is no such catalogue in the world. The library is, in a measure, a sealed casket without this key; the jewel can not fairly be got at without it. And, when it is made, it would prove an indispensable catalogue to every library in the land. All would have it, since in every library thousands of works stand, which are found in all others.

Without any catalogue, a library is little better than a "literary chaos," in searching through which, the time consumed would nearly balance the value of the materials gained. With only a general catalogue, in which the names of authors with the general titles of their works are given, the chaos is scarcely less complete; for we all know from our own experience, that under the general title of a book, some fifty subjects are not unfrequently discussed. Let us hope that this matter will not

be forgotten, nor suffered to lie long neglected. Its bearing upon the utility of the library is direct and obvious.

If we may judge from various out-door remarks, repeated, and from many distinct sources, there is another respect in which the Association may be greatly useful to the community. I have already alluded to the opinions of some of the early Directors regarding series of lectures on single topics. I presume that every habitual reader will bear me out in the declaration, that miscellaneous reading, with no fixed purpose or end in view, results in gains of small value, and in dissipation of the mind. Reading by subjects, and reading so thoroughly as to master them, is the only wisdom in reading. The habitual reader of newspapers, who reads nothing but journals with their thousand miscellaneous and unrelated subjects, gains nothing substantial; but makes a chaos of his mind, a jumble of the most heterogeneous materials, at the cost of all mental discipline, and the sacrifice of all true intellectual culture. Not more that is definite, *usable*, and tangible, is gained by heterogeneous book reading on all manner of subjects. Why are not these remarks equally true, as applied to miscellaneous lectures? Can one hour's attention to six different lectures, on widely different subjects, do for your mind, or mine, what a thorough discussion of a subject, by one man, can do in six lectures? To make any course of lectures profitable, there should be at the same time a course of reading pursued, on the same topics; and this may be undertaken when a systematic course is offered to the public, but it is impossible when the course is miscellaneous. Entertainment may be provided by a miscellaneous course: but entertainment is secondary; profit, improvement, is primary, and accords with the fundamental design of the Association.

And if these observations are, of themselves, of insufficient weight, then let the names of Dr. Cox, of Brooklyn, and of Rufus Choate, of Boston, be mentioned as those who have, within ten days, given utterance publicly to similar opinions. The opinions of the latter I have not seen, but have been informed by one of your number that, at the dedication of the

Peabody Institute, he strenuously protested against miscellaneous courses of lectures, as unprofitable, and little better than useless. Dr. Cox, in his historical circular, says, "the method of a miscellaneous course of various topics, and different, sometimes very different, lectures and lecturers—and so of a heterogeneous banquet of all possible contrarieties,—is not to be preferred. It is too vacant, too desultory, and too unpromising; too much like mental dissipation, or an expensive waste of time, in which the season is consumed, and nothing learned, nothing gained, nothing realized, of permanent value."

Systematic courses will succeed. It has been proved here whenever some tangible subject has been the basis of the course. The public is waiting for courses upon History—upon Geology—Chemistry—Natural Philosophy. Such lectures are always desirable, and desired. They stimulate reading and study; they add to stores of learning, and send the hearer out with the consciousness that he is wiser, with something to think of, and something to use.

In the dedication of this house to the genuine purposes of literature, and to the use of the public of St. Louis for "mental improvement," let us hope that it will remain sacred to these purposes alone. The ties between literature, literary culture and pure morality are obvious and many. An institution like this, surrounded with associations of a purely literary order only—devoted to literature, or that manifestly kindred only—consecrated altogether to mental and moral improvement, not to pleasure,—is an undoubted ally to religion. The ancient Egyptians viewed it thus, embellishing their libraries with the magnificent statues of their gods, and inscribing over their portals, "the medicine of the soul."

Hitherto it has been a source of the sincerest gratification to the friends of the institution, that the whole air of it, and all the associations clustering about this building, are suggestive only of literary culture and literary aims. Let there be, then, one building in St. Louis, like the Athæneum of Boston, sacred to literature, art and science alone.

It has been mentioned as the wonder of the age, that sam-

ples of the food, clothing and other works of art, of nations in every stage of the progress of art, should have been brought together in one exhibition—that from Otaheite and Labuan, gorgeous India and mysterious and ancient China, Singapore and Ceylon, Java and Sumatra, Mengatal and Palembang,—contributions, curious, rich and various—treasures of skill, and minute, detailed ingenuity—should have come to stand side by side with the works of Continental Europe, of Great Britain and Ireland, and of this republic—nations long civilized, and standing at the summit of progress in civilization and mechanical power. Has it never occurred to you that a library presents a spectacle, in the world of literature, analogous to that of the Great Exhibition in the world of art and science and human industry? Collected in London, under the auspices of Prince Albert, was a vast assemblage of the products of human hands and of the works of material art. An opportunity was then afforded to survey the march of progress—to notice each step from a state of barbarism to that of the perfection of European civilization, and to judge of the results and appreciate the benefits of all.

Every library is such an exhibition, on a greater or lesser scale, of the products of human thought, as varied as in the world of art, and covering the generations of men long dead, yet living evermore. Poetry, history, philosophy, theology—all there—the products of two thousand years—more curious than mechanism, more moving than sculpture, more instructive than manufactures, more nourishing than bread, more stimulating than all.

The world looked on the former with admiration, and thousands in a flood, day after day, streamed on to see. It was wonderful. But a library, such as our own, is in all respects more wonderful; for there, in one simultaneous exhibition, are the undying productions of all nations and people represented in the world of mind—of all moods and feelings—a picture of man's soul in all its varying humors and conditions—hope, joy, fear, thought, inspiration, and labor;—a representation of the entire progress of the human mind

for nearly four-score generations, of the condition of every people, and of the present altitude of human thought. And if the loftiest tributes were worthily bestowed upon the originator of the London Exhibition, let them not be denied to the originators and sustainers of better and nobler exhibitions in public libraries.

This building, to one who views it with those just conceptions which belong to it, is calculated to awaken deeper emotions than those with which the traveler visits Westminster Abbey. The remains of the mighty and the noble dead invest the spot where they lie with awe, and the homage paid there is solemn, with a reverence and devotion almost religious. Yet what are such remains but mouldering dust, precious and honored by association?—while along the lines of the shelves of this library are the memorials of that which alone was immortal in those now resting in the sepulchers of kings—the memorials of mind, crowned with earthly immortality, and instinct with a life which knows no fading, nor decay.

It is with no exertion of the imagination that some men, when they enter a library, seem to be begirt by the mighty dead, there, who belonged to the royal hierarchy of mind; and by a most pleasurable delusion do they see the faces of the dead, and fancy themselves in communion with those who are gone—the untitled nobility of our race. It seems not merely fanciful, but natural, that the hat should be removed from the head, and the voice subdued to whispers, in the very presence of the princes of human intellect. Some might well believe that the regulation requiring it, originated quite as much in a sentiment of respect for the undying dead, as in regard to appearances, and the convenience of the living who resort thither.

In dedicating this Mercantile Library building to the uses of literature and the mental improvement of the citizens of St. Louis, let the motives to use it be felt by all. It has not been erected as an architectural ornament, to be admired; but to be used with an industry unsurpassed in the workshop of the ar-

tizan. It belongs to you, citizens of St. Louis — is entrusted to you for use, and to be sustained. It is consecrated, primarily, to the use and service of the mercantile class, but placed within reach of all.

Is it necessary to say one word about the advantages of intellectual culture? The moving power of the civilization of this age is money; yet where it is possessed it does not imply mental culture, for wealth often gilds ignorance, meanness and stupidity. I know no reason why the distinction of "the learned professions" should exist at all. There is no reason why the mercantile profession should not be advanced to a level with the learned professions in point of literary culture. I know that business men say they have no time for aught save business. But men find time for all they *want* to do. Every man can find one hour a day for reading. Prof. Stowe, who is one of the most accomplished German scholars in the country, related to me that he acquired the language first, by the diligent use of half an hour of leisure time which he had every day after dinner.

Learning comes by little and little, culture by degrees; and a year of reading one hour daily, is equivalent to reading thirty days of twelve hours each, or sixty days of six hours each, or one hundred and twenty days of three hours each. Is that nothing? One new idea a day, one new thought, one new fact, is three hundred and sixty-five added to our stock in a year, besides the inestimable value of mental training and discipline which are secured by regular application to some mental pursuit.

What has been done may be done again. In the mercantile world have been many men eminent for distinction in every thing which constitutes the evidence of mental culture and literary attainments. John Hoole, the translator of "*Jerusalem Delivered*," was bred to the watchmaker's trade; afterwards clerk in the Office of East Indian Affairs, and Auditor of Public Accounts. Charles Lamb was a clerk almost all his days, pushed to death for time to do all that he desired, and always grumbling about his slavish life; yet he cultivated letters in

his hours of leisure, and is one of the glories of England, and the companion of literary men all over the world. John Halkett, recent librarian to the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh, was a woollen-draper's apprentice, and, while he was so, learned to read every language in Europe. Our own Bowditch, the correspondent and co-equal of La Place, was brought up in a ship-chandler's shop, and was a common seaman; yet he acquired the French, German, Spanish and Italian languages,—and on ship-board cultivated his peculiar talent, which made him one of the greatest mathematicians, and gave him renown among the mathematicians of Europe. Faraday, great among chemists, was a poor boy in an apothecary's shop. Arkwright, the inventor of the cotton jenny, was a barber till thirty years of age. Ferguson, the Scotch astronomer, was a shepherd's boy, and laid the foundations of his fame in the studies pursued while thus employed; and Burritt, familiar with fifty-two languages, learned the whole while a worker at the anvil.

The pursuits of business, or occupation for a livelihood, never consume all time, so that intellectual culture is precluded. Lord Eldon, Chancellor of England, was son and apprentice of a barge maker, and yet found time for study; and so did Lord Stowell, Judge of the Queen's Bench, the son and apprentice of a coal dealer; and so also did Lord Tenterden, of great learning, who was the son of a barber. Look among the business men of the world and see the scholars among them. Grote, the author of the noblest history of Greece yet written, appears among the bankers; and Rogers the poet, likewise. Then there are Lloyd, Horsly Palmer, Norman, and Salomons, all business men and Directors of the Bank of England, and all authors. Mr. Guys, a distinguished French merchant, was the author of a valuable Geography and History of Greece, and of an exceedingly stimulating treatise on the utility of literature and scientific accomplishments to commercial men, and attained celebrity as a man of letters. Ricardo, another of the same nation, beginning life with nothing but integrity and talent for capital, attained, among the engaging pursuits of business, a position among writers as one among the very

first of his age—his treatise on finance passing through four editions. Roscoe, of Liverpool, is known over the world as an ornament of commercial and literary circles; while Sprague and Carey, of our own land, are known in every State as eminent for business ability and success, and honored contributions to the literature of the republic; and Zelotes Hosmer, unsurpassed in business talent and in devotion to business, can boast the possession of the finest Greek library in the country, the riches of which he has made his own by study in hours of leisure. In all our cities are business men, strict, prompt and industrious in commercial affairs, who could put to shame many a professional student by the superiority of their learning in many departments of literature and science—learning attained by diligent use of hours (which all men can find) of release from the immediate, pressing avocations of business. It is a mistake to think that much time is necessary for such attainments. Bulwer, voluminous as a writer, a great reader, and of considerable learning, relates that he gave but three hours per day to literary pursuits. What is needed, is a diligent, systematic use of the time which can be gained, be it less or more.

It is also a mistake, occasioning embarrassment and discouragement to business men, to suppose that attainments in classical literature constitute the true test of learning and of literary culture. This is an idea which belongs to the dark ages. It has been fostered indeed by our colleges, and seminaries of learning, and it seems to be conceded, that deference is to be paid to those, who are learned in the languages of ancient Greece and Rome. But the learning and culture we want for the present time, is that which is derived from a study of English literature. English has its classics, as well as Greek and Latin; and as the first and second orators of the world, Demosthenes and Cicero, were great in influence, because of their marvellous power developed in the mastery and use of their own mother tongue, so must Americans fit themselves for such greatness in influence, for adorning the business and social circles of life, by the study of English literature and gaining the

riches of the English tongue. Canning, Chatham and Burke, were constantly at the fountains of English literature. England had her Helicon, and Parnassus, and Castalia, as well as Greece; and Calliope and Cleio and the whole family of the Muses had their mountains, and their grottoes, and their sacred springs in the British Isle. Daniel Webster received a liberal education, of which, to him the chief valuable element was his thorough training in English study. It has been stated by a classmate of his, that he was unwearied and laborious in his efforts to acquire the riches of his native tongue. These riches are within the reach of all Americans. English literature, steadily read and studied, will enrich and refine any mind which is devoted to it. It will constitute a broad foundation for usefulness and respectability; the study of it will enlarge the range of the intellect, and develop its powers, while adding, continually, to its stores of learning, and its fund of thought, establishing man's title to deference and praise, where only it can be established, in the wealth of his cultivated intellect and heart.

Fortunate will it be for St. Louis, for the character and eminence and usefulness of its business men, and for the delights and refinements of social life, if this institution, by its stimulus to literary culture, shall lead our business men to see, by their own trial of it, that there is no want of harmony between the necessities and pursuits of trade and the accomplishments of literature—that a man of education enjoys numerous advantages over his ignorant neighbor. It was the opinion of Addison that a man of education, in business, was likely to be more honest than an ignorant one, and certainly, other things being equal, it is almost absurd to suppose that education will not make better laborers—better artisans—better merchants. Success depends upon intelligence. And will not cultivated intelligence accomplish more than ignorance? Respectability and influence are not enjoyed by the cultured and uncultured in equal degree, nor in the social circle is equal honor paid to blank ignorance, and literary wealth. The culture of the intellect produces its outward results, moulding the manners, and

imparting grace to the address—since the refinement and polish attained by study, or studious reading, bear a relation to the sensibilities and the feelings, which always exert a controlling power over the manners, and impart expression to the outward man.

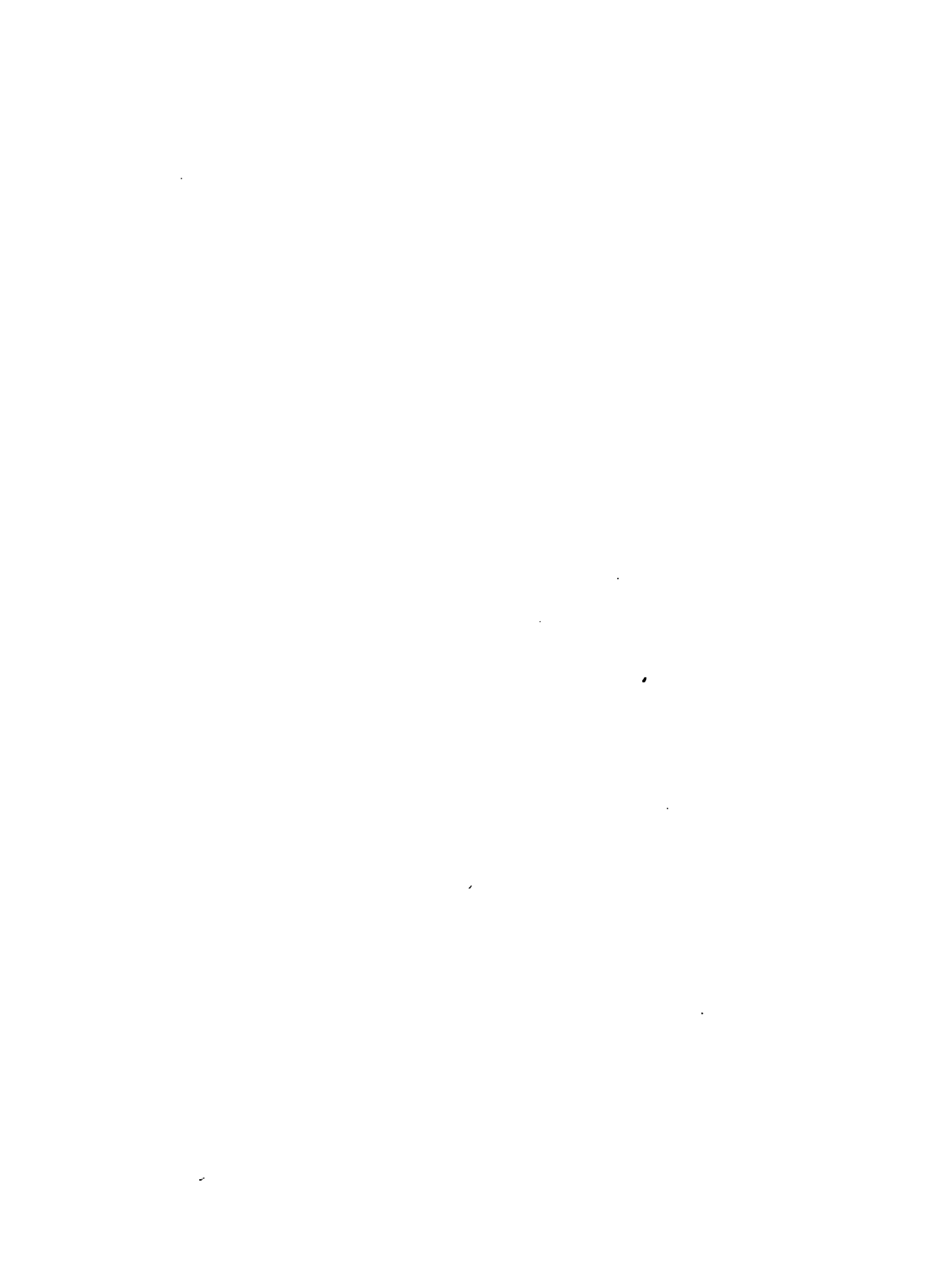
Fortunate and happy will this institution prove, if it shall lead its members to discover that “literature, like virtue, is its own reward.” Absolute, indolent rest, man does not require. Change is rest, and recreation too. The weariness and exhaustion, consequent upon business toil, may find relief in the soothing, tranquilizing pursuits of literature. There is a reward, and there is real repose in the delights afforded by intellectual pursuits. Men may aim at high literary attainments for the sake of the ornament they confer, or the aid which they furnish to influence and success. But they gain more—they find pleasure in the use of the means—their self-respect is deepened—their conscious tone of character is elevated—they are happy in companionship with the choice society of all ages—they experience the most exhilarating of all sensations—that of intense mental activity—as pleasurable as exhilarating—they enlarge and enrich their inward resources, beyond the reach of all outward change, in the enjoyment of which, the misfortunes of life may be forgotten, its solitudes allayed, the soul lifted above depressing care, tranquilized and refreshed for a renewal of the earnest deeds of practical life.

When a taste for such attainments has been created and fostered here, in additional numbers—when such benefits have been secured and a foundation thus laid for permanent individual happiness, and for great social and public benefits, these results themselves will vindicate the claim of the founders and supporters of this Association to the honor and the gratitude of the community in future years, as like ones have in the past.

Let, then, this institution be cherished and nurtured with a care and pride worthy of its ennobling design. Increasing numbers yearly share in its cheaply purchased yet priceless advantages. But more may be done than has been. The true and reliable supporters of an Association like this, must be sought for in

all coming years, among its intelligent membership, whose attachment to it has grown with their own intellectual culture. Let that membership be increased yearly ; and then the words of that honored benefactor of England, Sir Thomas Bodley, uttered with reference to his own first public library, may always, with hopeful courage, be uttered by ourselves : " We cannot but presume that, counting what numbers of noble benefactors have already concurred in a fervor of affection to this noble place of study, we shall be sure, in time to come, to find some others of like disposition to the advancement of learning."







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